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my establishment at Niambara, on the west bank of the Nile, some four to five days' journey in the interior, where he will reinforce himself with some thirty men, in addition to the forty he proceeds with from here; and, unless he meets you in the neighbourhood of Gondokoro, he is to continue due south in the direction of the Lake Nyanza, which, as he proceeds, he is to inquire for, until my wife and self come up with him.

"Should Abd el Majid effect a happy meeting with you, prior to my arrival, he is to place himself and men at your disposal, return and conduct you to the boats, and make them over to you for your disposal.

"The bearer has in charge some provisions, quinine—which latter I trust you will not require—and clothing for your immediate requirements; and hoping that all may go well, with my best wishes to Grant and yourself,

"Believe me, my dear Speke,

"Yours ever sincerely,

"JOHN PETHERICK.

"P.S. Papers and magazines for your amusement are sent with the bearer; but the letters and Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society, according to you their gold medal, I prefer for greater safety conveying to you myself.

"God bless you both.

"J. P."

The PRESIDENT said the first paper that would be read would give an account, by a French gentleman, of Cambodia. Cambodia was not like Borneo or any other wild district, of whose past history we knew little, and which had comparatively little interest for us in the future: it was at the present moment the scene of a struggle between the French and the natives, and there was a prospect of a French empire being ultimately established in that country. Cambodia has been the scene of a remarkable civilisation. We have the relation of a Chinese envoy to Cambodia, at the end of the thirteenth century, who gives an account of the wonders of the capital, of which the ruins still exist;—great ruins of a city with five double gates, displaying not only masses of masonry with large carvings, but many monuments of interest. When the Portuguese arrived in that country, Cambodia was still a seat of empire. Unfortunately, towards the end of the last century, a disputed succession took place. Siam on the one hand, and the Annamites, who are the opponents of the French on the other, divided the country between them; and the whole land has been made desolate, the population has decreased, and in every way it has fallen below its former state of prosperity. In 1860 the French made demonstrations against Cambodia. In 1861 they took its capital Saigon; and there was every prospect of their extending their conquests and establishing themselves permanently in the land.

The Papers read were—

1. *Travels in Cambodia.* By M. MOUHOT.

M. MOUHOT traversed Cambodia from east to west, and also ascended the Mékon River to the frontier of Laos. He returned to the coast by crossing the waterparting between it and the basin of the Menam River, and descending to Bangkok.

The Mékon is a vast melancholy-looking river, three miles broad, covered with islands, and flowing with the rapidity of a torrent: its shores are covered with aquatic birds, but its waters are almost deserted by canoes. A plain, covered with coarse herbage, separates

it from the forest by which Cambodia is overspread, and which can rarely be traversed except by cutting a way. That forest is exceedingly unhealthy. M. Mouhot reached Brelum, a village in lat. $11^{\circ} 58'$, long. $107^{\circ} 12'$, inhabited by a secluded race of wild people, whose customs are minutely described, differing in features from the Cambodians and Laos tribes, and forming one of a series of similar groups widely distributed in the less accessible parts of Cochin-China, Cambodia, and Burmah. They are believed by M. Mouhot to be aborigines of the land. Two Catholic missionaries were resident at Brelum.

Subsequently the author visited the large Buddhist ruins of Ongior, of which he has brought back numerous sketches. He speaks of the mineral wealth of Cambodia; its iron, gold, lead, and copper. In the islands of Phu-Quoc or Koh-Tron, belonging to Cochin-China, and near to Kom-pot, there are rich mines of coal, similar to our cannel coal, from which ornaments are made. Several extinct volcanoes exist in Petchaburi, of heights not exceeding 2000 feet above the sea-level, and there are two active ones in an island called Ko-mun, lat. $12^{\circ} 30'$, long. $101^{\circ} 50'$, in the Gulf of Siam.

DR. HODGKIN stated that besides the two letters, portions of which had been read, and the drawings and charts, M. Mouhot had likewise sent an elaborate description of the ruins which he found at Ongior and in its vicinity. The plans on the table would give some idea of the magnitude of these ruins. A great part of the manuscript which accompanied them described their structure and workmanship. They were constructed chiefly of granite, and many of the stones were not only of very large size, but were elaborately carved. The workmanship of some of them was described as exquisite, and the designs were not so deficient in artistic taste as one might suppose. Many of them represented imaginary animals, such as serpents with many heads; others represented beasts of burden, horses, elephants, and bullocks. These temples were situated in a district which was now completely embedded in a forest very difficult of access, and were so much in ruins that trees were growing upon the roofs, and many of the galleries were in a state of great decay. The base and a large portion of the elevation were constructed of a ferruginous rock; but for the upper part blocks of granite were used, so exquisitely cut as to require no mortar to fill the interstices, and carved with reliefs relating to mythological subjects, indicative of Buddhism. M. Mouhot had copied some of the inscriptions, which, from their antiquity, the natives who accompanied him were unable to read. The characters so nearly resembled the Siamese, that Dr. H. had no doubt that a skilful archæologist would have very little difficulty in deciphering them. He believed that the remains in question would be found equal in value to those which had been recently explored in Central America; and he felt convinced that when the descriptions were published, M. Mouhot would be thought deserving of great respect.

MR. CRAWFORD said it was about forty years since he visited the country, but his recollection of it continued vivid to this day. Most people knew very little about Cambodia; its very name was only familiar to us in that of its product, gamboge, which word was nothing else than a corruption of Cambodia. It was one of five or six States lying between India and China, whose inhabitants had lived under a second or third rate civilisation, at all times—never equal,

whether physically, morally, or intellectually, to the Chinese or even to the Hindoos. At the present time Cambodia was a poor little State, having been encroached upon by the Siamese to the north, and by the people of Annam, the inhabitants of Tonquin, and of Cochin-China to the south. M. Mouhot had given us an account of a country that no European had ever visited before. With respect to that gentleman's belief that certain wild tribes, whom he described, had descended from Thibet, he, Mr. Crawford, rather thought that his ethnology was at fault. For his part he believed these wild people to be no other than natives of the country, mere mountaineers, who had escaped from the bondage and hence from the civilisation of the plains. Such people existed in Hindostan, in Siam, in the Burmese empire, in Cochin-China, and in China itself: in fact, they were of no distinct origin, but simply the natives of the country in a rude, savage, uncivilised state.

With respect to the French, he did not know on what grounds they had gone to Cambodia. They had obtained possession of one spot which was eminently fitted for a settlement. The finest river in all India, so far as European shipping was concerned, was the river at Saigon, which he had himself ascended about fourteen miles, and found it navigable even for an old "seventy-four." He believed it was the intention of the French to attempt the conquest of the whole of Cochin-China. If they effected it and occupied it, they would find it a monstrous difficulty. It would prove another Algeria, with the additional disadvantage of being 15,000 miles off instead of 500, and within the torrid instead of the temperate zone. The climate was very hot; the country was covered with forests; the malaria and the heat rendered it unsuitable for the European constitution. If they made an advance upon the Cochin-Chinese capital, they would find the enterprise one of great difficulty. From Saigon to the northern confines of Cochin-China the distance is 1500 miles, and the capital itself could not be less than seven or eight hundred miles from Saigon, situated on a small river navigable only for large boats, with a narrow mouth and two considerable fortresses, one on each side, at its mouth. When they arrived they would find one of the largest and most regular fortifications in the East. He believed it was the most regular after Fort William in Bengal, and a great deal larger than Fort William. It was constructed by the French, and now they will have considerable difficulty in conquering their own work. The French had a perfect right to be in Cochin-China, and being there would not only do us no harm but even good, however questionable the benefit to themselves; for their presence amounted to the substitution of a friendly and civilized government for a rude and inhospitable one.

The drawings on the table were exceedingly curious and interesting. They were admirably done, and they exhibited representations of some remarkable monuments, evidently of Bhuddist origin. They reminded him very much, though inferior in quality and beauty, of the monuments of the island of Java.

He never heard of volcanoes when he was in Cambodia; but he had no doubt that M. Mouhot's information was correct, though it appeared he did not describe them from his own personal experience.

He would add a word upon the alphabets which were upon the table. The Cambodians had invented a written phonetic character, which they used at the present time; therefore there could be no difficulty in understanding a Cambodian manuscript. But there were several of those now exhibited which were of more or less antiquity. One of them seemed to be the alphabet which was used by the Cambodians in their religious rites. The figure of Bhudda showed that the Cambodians were worshippers of Bhudda.
